

## **Association between demographic factors and occupational stress among physiotherapists in government hospitals, Colombo District, Sri Lanka**

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Occupational stress among healthcare professionals is a growing concern, particularly in physiotherapy, where high physical and emotional demands exist. Although international research has examined stress among physiotherapists, limited evidence is available in Sri Lanka, especially within government hospitals. Identifying how demographic factors influence occupational stress can guide targeted stress management interventions and improve professional well-being. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among all physiotherapists working in government hospitals within the Colombo District, Sri Lanka. This included physiotherapists employed at tertiary-care teaching hospitals, base hospitals, and divisional hospitals, with a total of 127 participants. Stress levels were measured using two validated tools, the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) to assess work-related stress factors, and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to capture general perceived stress. Demographic data, including age, gender, and years of experience, were collected via a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test. Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Of the 127 physiotherapists, 83 (65.4%) were female and most (38.6%) were aged 35–44 years. OSI scores showed significant associations with gender ( $p=0.001$ ), age ( $p=0.03$ ), and years of experience ( $p=0.004$ ), with higher stress reported among males, physiotherapists aged 55 years or older, and those with more than 10 years of service. In contrast, PSS scores showed no significant association with gender or age. These findings suggest that occupational stress captures workplace-specific stressors not fully reflected by the PSS. Demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and years of experience, are significantly associated with occupational stress among physiotherapists in government hospitals. The dual use of OSI and PSS provided complementary insights, distinguishing between occupational and general stress. Targeted, demographic-specific interventions are recommended to support the psychological well-being and professional sustainability of physiotherapists in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Occupational stress, Physiotherapists, Demographics, Government hospitals, Colombo District*